While Jonathan and Sheryl Layne were equally committed to establishing the Adopt-a-Traveler program, they had different reasons. For Sheryl, the fund was another way to “pay it forward.” She and her family had been fortunate enough to travel extensively, and she saw the program as a way to help give amazing opportunities to deserving students. Sheryl’s participation in the program reflected her belief that traveling helps students grow and enhances their educational experience beyond classroom walls.

For Jonathan, the value of studying abroad was something he understood firsthand. As an undergraduate he spent a year studying abroad at universities in England and Poland. The experience, he says, was deep, meaningful, and nothing short of “life-altering.” Knowing how
The Gift of Travel: Jonathan and Sheryl Layne

(continued)

The Laynes, giving back was not a form of reimbursement but an opportunity to convey a real thank you—to a place that had made a difference in their lives and was making a difference in the world.

Like its sister program Adopt-a-Scholar, Adopt-a-Traveller pairs a generous benefactor with an academically gifted student and sends the donor a profile of the scholar. As is often true of these types of programs, strong bonds are forged between recipients and donors. In the case of the Laynes’ gift, the impact—and the experience of studying abroad—went far beyond either side’s expectations.

Victoria Bell was the student with whom the Laynes were paired. A double major in biology and environmental studies with an impressive record of University service and extracurricular activities, Victoria was the type of engaged scholar that Emory is proud to educate. The support provided by the Laynes enabled Victoria to backpack through Namibia and Botswana, tracking the desert elephants of Africa for a research project. She had dreams of a career in medicine and wrote to the Laynes about her work in a genetics laboratory at Emory and her interest in resource management.

To thank the Laynes, Victoria created a scrapbook of her experiences during her summer abroad. She wanted her photos and correspondence to show them that they were, in fact, right there with her as she trekked through the African countryside. In her initial letter, she wrote: “Hopefully, this scrapbook can be a window into what I experienced and learned while I was abroad—and reassure you that your donation... will make a difference for one lucky student like myself, just dying to have a life-altering experience.”

As seasoned philanthropists, the Laynes had committed resources to Emory and other community organizations for years. But the experience of funding students through the Adopt-a-Traveller program brought unexpected levels of satisfaction. As Sheryl explains, “I just don’t think I realized the extent to which this would change a life—and how happy it makes John and me to know that you have touched someone’s life in a meaningful way. You have made an impact on her, but you’re changed too. She is one of the students at Emory who want to go out there and change the world. And I am convinced that they will.”

Gratitude for opportunities extended thirty years ago is benefiting students at Emory today, thanks to alumni like Sheryl and Jonathan Layne. Through this program the Laynes are not only thanking an institution who investing in students who want to do good and to make a difference in the world.

—Tiffany Worboy

For more information about how you can help provide life-altering experiences for exceptional students like Victoria Bell, please contact the Emory College Development Office at artsandsciences@emory.edu or 866-MY-EMORY.

We’re excited to welcome seven new Alumni Board members in 2010-11

Natascha French 02C (right) received a BA in journalism and international studies from Emory and is the president and co-founder of the company “envy2 the 9.” She has been very involved in professional and student committees and as a member of the Emory Alumni in Washington, D.C., Chicago and Los Angeles. She lives in Beverly Hills.

Leigh Friedman 05C graduated with a BA in journalism and theater studies. She was a member of several Emory honor societies and was president of Alpha Delta Pi executive editor of the Wheel. A regional marketing manager for ESPN, she resides in Baltimore and volunteers with numerous local charities and groups.

Carlos Gonzalez 97C (right) received his BA in political science and Near Eastern studies before graduating from Northwestern University School of Law. He is a partner in the firm Diaz, Reus & Targ with a specialty in litigation and international law. While at Emory, Carlos was honored with awards for debate and academic excellence. A member of the British American Business Council and the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce, he lives in Miami.

Darcy Levit is the newly elected president of the Emory College Alumni Board. With more than twenty years of experience coordinating volunteers and working in nonprofit organizations, Darcy believes in the impact of volunteer and philanthropic leadership. She served as president of Volunteer Emory during her senior year at Emory and earned an MS in policy studies from Georgia State University, positioning her for a career in the nonprofit arena.

Most recently, Darcy has served as director of development at the Potomac Conservancy and executive director of the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia. Before that she was chief development officer at the National Museum of Women in the Arts. Darcy has also volunteered in fundraising and corporate development for Zoo Atlanta and the Atlanta Humane Society.

Darcy lives in Northern Virginia, where with her children and standard poodle she frequents local parks to hike, bike and observe the natural beauty of the area. She enjoys meeting Emory alumni in Washington, D.C., for visits to art museums, theaters, live music and ballet performances. Her local volunteer commitments have included park clean-up initiatives and hunger-prevention programs.

President, Emory College Alumni Board
We’re excited to welcome seven new Alumni Board members in 2010-11 (continued)

Theron Jones 94C (left) received his BA in chemistry from Emory in 1994, a master’s of public policy from UCLA in 2000 and his doctorate of dental medicine in 2004 from the Medical College of Georgia. The owner of Sandtown Family Dentistry in Atlanta, Dr. Jones has volunteered with the Atlanta Youth Council, the American Cancer Society, Leadership in Diverse Communities, The Carter Center, the Voting Rights Institute, and UCLA’s Minority Outreach Program.

Jane Goodman Preiser 81C graduated with a BA in psychology from Emory and received a master’s of health services administration from George Washington University. Her community involvement includes fundraising for Greens Farms Academy, the Westport Playhouse, a Near and Far outreach for the homeless, and the United Way Campaign. Her daughter Alexandra is a freshman at Emory. Jane lives in Westport, Connecticut.

Sanjiv Reej 95C earned his BA in English from Emory and a master’s of healthcare administration and MBA from Georgia State University. He currently works in sales and marketing for Pfizer Pharmaceuticals. A member of the Emory Wind Ensemble, Sanjiv has participated in Emory Career Network, Boston Emory Cares, and resides in Longmeadow, Maryland.

Joshua Teplitzky 82C 86B 86L received his BA in political science, as well as business and law degrees, from Emory. He is an attorney with Teplitzky and Company specializing in tax law. Joshua is a member of the Emory Parent Association and the New York/Connecticut Alumni Association, and is vice president of the Hygeia Foundation. His daughter Taylor is a student at Emory. Joshua resides in Woodbridge, Connecticut.